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## THE JUGGLER OF NANKIN.

### THE GRANDEE'S PLOT.

A Story of the Celestial Empire.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

#### CHAPTER I.

PAUL ARDEN.



UPON a fair, warm day in midspring, near the Bund, at Shanghai, lay an English frigate. Her men were nearly all upon deck, some of them engaged in laying out the rigging, polishing the guns, cleaning the brass-work, etc., while the rest busied themselves in looking off upon the quaint scenery that lay open to their view. The curious houses, with their dingy tiles and over-reaching, bent-up eaves, the tall pagodas, with their gilded ornaments and peaked roofs, the long line of clumsy junks, with their stumpy masts and bamboo sails, and the still more curious tide of humanity that thronged the quay, with its gaudy, fluttering dresses of blue, purple, pink, red, yellow and black, all combine to form a scene both strange and novel to the European sailor. And then there is the noise that continuously salutes his ears—a noise which at first amounts to a deafening din, but which becomes bearable by ear, proceeding from gongs and drums, fire-crackers and torpedoes, and shouts and yells. Altogether it is a strange affair, and gives a reliable idea of Chinese cities in general. The wind is from the eastward, and as the seamen are spared the stench that rocks up from the filthy streets and gutters that lay near the river and its tributary creeks.

Upon the poop of the frigate stood two men, one of them wearing a sort of undress uniform, and the other being habited in the court costume of a British minister. There were others upon the poop, but it was with these two that we have to do at the present time. The first mentioned person—in the undress uniform—was a young man, not over five and twenty years of age, with a look of quick, bright intelligence, and a bold, frank bearing. He was not stout in his build, but the slightest observer would have seen that his frame was muscular and compact in the extreme. His hair, which grew in wavy masses, was of a dark brown color, seeming almost black in certain lights, and his eyes, which were large and piercing, were of the darkest, deepest hazel. His brow was high and full, and his other features clearly defined and regular. His face was deeply bronzed by exposure, showing most plainly that he had been no idle life. With regard to his beauty there could have been but one opinion among those who seek real beauty in the nobly developed man, for he was a man in every sense of the word—a good, kind, generous, bold man. Such was Paul Arden. His father, when living, had been an English nobleman. He was a Commissioner to Canton, from the British Government, and it was at Canton that he died, about twelve years previous to the time of the opening of our story. Paul had accompanied him on his mission, and had spent most of the time, since the death of his father, in China, where he had served the government in various ways, receiving ample remuneration for his services. Being naturally of a quick, energetic turn, he had thoroughly mastered the Chinese language, and there were but few of its quaint and difficult intonations that he did not understand.

Paul's companion—he in the court dress—was Lord Archibald Sumpter, an elderly man, who had charge, for the time, of the British consulate in Shanghai.

"I should think," said Sumpter, in furtherance of a conversation which had been going on but a few minutes, "that you would rather return now to England. Your father's estates are ready for you, and I know that honor and respect will be yours as soon as you assume the position which belongs to you in the kingdom. Come, you have spent years enough in this empire of fat and folly—why not seek the home of

your birth, where you have warm-hearted relatives still living?"

"No, no—not yet," replied the youth, shoving by his manner that he was affected by his friend's kindness. Not yet, my lord. Between the Tiao lake and Fong-tching-yo, away beyond Nankin, there are some temples of Fo which I must visit. I have heard such wonderful accounts of them from the Buddhist priests that I have determined to see them if the thing is possible.

"It will be a dangerous undertaking," said Sumpter, with a dubious shake of the head. "A few miles back from here it is safe enough to travel, but when it comes to a few hundreds the case is different. Do you remember Lord Buxton?"

"The Lord William Buxton?"

"Yes."

"I remember him well. He was my father's friend."

"Well," resumed Sumpter, "he thought to travel, and you perhaps know the result? He was most cruelly murdered, and his mangled body sent to the English government at Hong Kong."

"Yes," said Paul, with a slight shade of sadness upon his features, and speaking in a lower tone, "I remember all about it, for I was at Hong Kong at the time, and I attended Lord William's funeral. I shall never forget how I loved him, for he was kind to me when I was a boy, and he ministered to my father in his dying hour. I wept, my lord, when I stood by the noble Buxton's coffin."

"Then why not take warning by Lord Buxton's fate, and give up this projected tramp?" inquired Sumpter.

"Ah, Sir Archibald, you know those were troublous times when Lord Buxton was killed. Things are different now. We are not only at peace with China, but the people here stand in fear of offending our government. If you can get me that letter from the governor of Shanghai I shall feel myself in no danger, for I know that part of the way I can pass as a veritable Chinaman. I speak the language well, and I surely look almost brown enough for a Celestial."

"But your hair—and your eyes."

"Ah, a wig will cover the first, and the second I can squint into some sort of conservatism. But if I can have the letter from the Shanghai governor, I shall feel under no apprehension, for no one will dare to molest me with such a protection about my person. Don't you think you can get the letter?"

"Yes, I think I can. I have done the governor some favors, and I feel sure that he will grant me the boon I have asked for you. He may send it off by Tai-tsung, the old mandarin of whom you have heard me speak. But yet I would urge you to give it up."

"No, no, my lord," returned Paul, with a weak smile. "I think it is almost a fate that I should visit the old Buddhist temples of Fong-tching-yo. It was there that tradition says that Wou found the water of life. Have you ever heard the story?"

"No."

"This Wou was a prince of the blood. He sought the water of life, and the god Buddha, at Fong-tching-yo, gave it to him. He lived three hundred years, and at the end of that time he lost the never-failing phial which contained the liquid. All search proved fruitless, and he went back after more, but before he reached the temple he died. He was sainted, however, for his old age, and a wooden image of him is now kept in the temple where Buddha first smiled upon him. I have had some most strange dreams about that same temple. I have dreamed, I know not how many times, that I found the water of life there, and also that the great Joss gave it to me; and I have dreamed that I found there a flower whose bloom was perpetual, and which gave to its possessor eternal health and beauty. These dreams are continually upon me since I first thought of visiting the place. Something seems to bid me go."

"A mere chimera of a youthful brain," said Sumpter, with a smile.

"It may be so," returned Paul; "but nevertheless I am resolved to go."

Here the conversation was broken in upon by the shrill pipe of the boatman's whistle, and upon looking shoreward our two friends saw a mandarin's barge putting off. They knew that these were high functionaries who had been invited to visit the ship, so they left the poop and went down to the mainmast. All work was at once put aside, the men were called to quarters, and the mariners were drawn up in single file under the break of the poop. Shortly afterwards the clumsy barge came alongside, and three mandarins came over the side. The officers of the frigate removed their caps, and the Celestial grandees bowed and scraped most prodigiously.

"There is Tai-tsung," whispered Lord Sumpter.

"Ay—I see him," returned Paul. "I hope he has the letter."

"—ah! He is coming this way. He has recognized us."

Sumpter was right, for the old mandarin was waddling towards the spot with his face all beaming with fat smiles and mysterious winks, and from the quaint bobbing of his head it was evident that he had something to communicate, so his lordship left Paul standing near the mainmast and approached the mandarin.

"A letter for you," said Tai-tsung, fumbling beneath his long blue robe.

shore. He sought the apartments he had previously occupied in the foreign settlement, which was without the walls of the Chinese town, and here he began to prepare for his journey. He felt much elated by his good fortune in having obtained the passport, for he knew that his journey would now be rendered comparatively secure from harm.

By the time it was dusk the youth had nearly everything ready, and as the shades of evening began to deepen he sat down by his window and gazed out upon the waters of the Woosung. For a while he thought of the journey he was to make, and with that thought came the strange dreams that had of late visited his hours of sleep. Slight as they may have appeared when told to other ears, yet they had much influence upon him. He could not drive them from him, nor could he separate them from a certain dim, indefinable idea of fate which had taken possession of his mind.

In this mood Paul Arden grew sad and downcast—not unhappy—but only pervaded by a sort of calm melancholy. He thought of times that were past—of times when he had a mother to love him and care for him. He remembered when that good, kind mother died—of standing by the green turf that arose above her grave, and of kneeling upon that grave and weeping. He was a boy then. Ere long his wandering thoughts ran on the scene when his father died—he remembered how looked that pale and sunken

cover that it was not his own skin. From the top of this depended a thick, glossy braid of black hair which reached nearly to the inner side of the knees. When Paul surveyed himself in the mirror he was really astonished at his own metamorphosis. He bowed to himself, and talked Chinese to himself, and he could not help laughing outright to see the comical cut of that second self in the mirror. He secured his money in a small bag which he hung over his right shoulder, and then he carried concealed beneath his vest a pair of double-barrelled pistols.

Thus equipped, Paul set out. At the distance of about ten miles from the city he struck the river again, and here he hired a boatman to carry him on towards the great lake of Tai-hon. He reached the borders of the lake on the evening of the second day, having travelled not far from seventy-five miles. Here he found a small village, inhabited mostly by peasants, and he easily obtained food and lodgings at the rough, dirty inn which was kept open for travellers and the lake fishermen who might be forced in there by sudden storms.

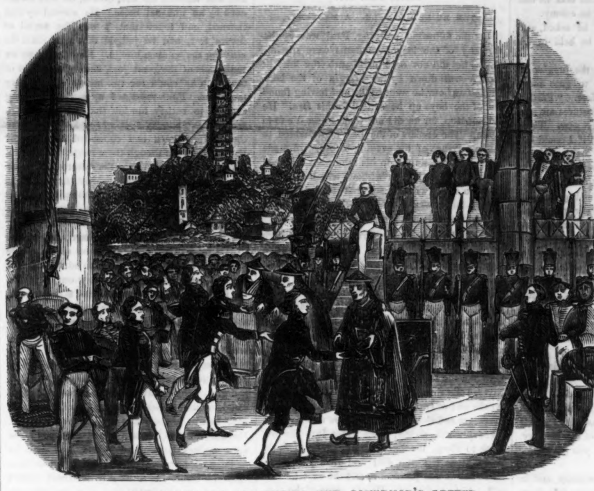
It was not quite sundown when our hero reached this inn. He had taken a drink of tea, and was quietly smoking his pipe, when he was aroused by the sharp tinkling of bells and the yells of men and boys in the yard.

"What does that all mean?" he asked of the fat, greasy host, who sat on an old carved lounge smoking opium.

"O, that's Ye-fu-hi, the great Juggler of Nankin," replied the host, lifting himself with difficulty from his seat, and waddling towards the window that overlooked the yard. "The greatest man of the time," the obese publican resumed, after he had placed himself comfortably against the low stool of the open window. "He can do things that make the great Tiao look astonished. He counts the stars, and holds the comets by their tails. He makes money where there is no money, and he makes the rice grow outwards. See, he is going to please the women and children."

Paul remembered that he had heard of this Ye-fu-hi—that he had heard him spoken of in Shanghai as a most wonderful man, and he had a great curiosity to see him. So he arose and went out into the yard, and there he found the object of wonder juggling his implements for exhibition. The juggler was a quaint-looking man, to begin with. He was very tall and stout, and much darker in complexion than most of his countrymen; but it was evidently long exposure in his wandering mode of life that had made him so. His face was somewhat wrinkled with age, but his step was yet bold and firm. His large, angular, black eyes sparkled with intensity as he gazed about him, and his long, bridled moustache helped to give mark to his features. In dress he was old enough, his robe being of many colors, and worked with curious devices, such as birds, serpents, dragons, and my-terious characters which none but himself could translate. Upon the top of his conical cap was perched a six-headed hydra carved from wood, and then his long queue was ornamented with little gods done in glass and porcelain. At first sight the juggler might have drawn forth only a smile, but upon regarding him more closely the beholder was sure to be struck with a kind of awe, for there was something about the strange man that was not to be laughed at, nor yet trifled with; and then his eyes—that keen, quick orb of fire—when they rested upon the effect was almost electrical.

At length his little table was arranged, and for some time he performed curious little tricks just to amuse the children and women. He made little balls dance in the air, drew long dragons out from little nut-shells, wore silk from the rind of a pomegranate, and made two short sticks dance on his table. But this did not seem at all congenial to his tastes, and he evidently did it more for the purpose of gaining the good will of the people than from any self-interest. After the sticks had done dancing he took an egg from a small box by his side, and put it into a cotton bag. This he shook and pounded upon the edge of the table till the egg appeared to have been pretty essentially smashed up, and then he opened the bag and began to take therefrom little square cakes of candy which he distributed amongst the children. The youngsters



THE MANDARIN PRESENTING THE GOVERNOR'S LETTER.

"From the governor?" asked Sumpter.

"Yes," returned the mandarin, drawing forth a yellow packet bearing a great red seal; and Sumpter put out his hand to receive it.

[SEE ENGRAVING.]

Tai-tsung winked and smiled more than ever when he placed the letter in Sumpter's hand, and by his manner he plainly indicated that the matter must be kept as secret as possible, for, as he afterwards explained, the governor was afraid that other foreigners might want favors of a like kind, and he dared not grant any more.

The mandarins remained on board the ship nearly an hour, and after they were gone Sumpter handed the letter to Paul, and having sought a place secure from observation he opened it. It was a strip of tough yellow paper, containing a column of Chinese hieroglyphics, and Paul quickly deciphered them. They were to the effect that the bearer was a pious missionary, and that Buddha would protect him in his journeyings, and it bore the governor's own signature. Both the youth and Sumpter smiled as they read it.

"Never mind," said Paul, after he had read it the second time, "I have a little deception in it, but I will use it, even though I be taken for a Buddhist priest."

"It will serve you, certainly," returned his lordship, "for few of the people would dare to trample upon the protection of a powerful mandarin. Now you can go and visit the curiosities you wish to see, and then I hope you will return to England and write a book, for you must surely possess a great fund of information."

Paul Arden smiled a reply, and shortly afterwards he took leave of the officers of the frigate, whose guest he had been, and returned to the

check—how the dying noble blessed his son and left him with an inheritance of honor. All this Paul Arden remembered; and he remembered, too, that he had no brother nor sister to share with him the griefs of his orphanage—that he had no near relatives to bless him. Relatives, to be sure, he had, relatives who might love and cherish him—but he remembered them not; the most he could remember was that which he had lost.

But before the youth retired he cheered himself up with the reflection that he was about to add to his stock of knowledge—that he was about to visit a section of the empire that he had long had a desire to see—and he thought that when this was done, he would go back to his home in Old England. But even here his thought was not clear, for, think as he would at that lone hour, that same dim, indefinable image came up from the unexplored future.

#### CHAPTER II.

##### THE JUGGLER.

ON the following morning Paul Arden was ready to set out upon his journey. He had dressed himself in a thorough Chinese garb—the long blue vest or robe, reaching nearly to his feet, confined at the waist by a silken cord, from which was suspended a knife and a pair of chopsticks. The drawers were of linen, the boots of stout silk, and the cap was of the usual pyramidal form, lined with satin, and covered with the neatly wrought cane, having a tuft of red hair at the top which nearly covered it. The youth had folded his own hair neatly up out of sight, and above it he wore a flash-colored skull-cap of such exquisite finish and fit, that a very close examination would have been required to dis-

shouted and yelled in their delight, and as a word from the juggler they began to disperse.

As soon as the children were most of them gone, Yefo-bi packed up his implements, and then turned towards the inn.

"Who among you would look into the future?" he asked; for several men had collected about the door. "Who would like to see that which is now hidden from you? I can tell you that which is, and to which is to come."

No one seemed inclined to profit by the juggler's offer, and ere long his gaze rested upon our hero. The latter was startled as he met those keen, black eyes, for he could not help it; but yet he did not avert his gaze, nor did he exhibit any perturbation.

"You, sir," said Yefo-bi, coming nearer to Paul, and looking him steadily in the face, "you should let me draw your horoscope."

"I am not anxious," replied the youth, not at all desirous of being made the centre of observation.

"But I will tell you nothing to your disadvantage. If I see storms and clouds over your way I will keep them from you. I will not draw your full horoscope. I will only read the face. It is a great truth which I have learned, young sir, that men's fortunes are written upon their faces. The secret is there—every act of life leaves a light or a stain upon the face, though few can read the mystic scroll. I shall tell you what I see in your face."

"No, no, not now," uttered Paul, betraying a little trepidation, and at the same time trying to get his face as much into the shade as possible. In truth he began to fear that the juggler might really possess some strange power, and he had reason for wishing that his secrets might be kept in his own bosom.

Yefo-bi insisted no more, but turned his attention to a fisherman who had moved towards him, and Paul Ardenen seized the opportunity to go back into the house, where he relighted his pipe, and then sat down in one corner away from the light of the window. His true character had not yet been discovered, and though he felt much confidence in his disguise, yet he thought it best to conceal his features as much as possible without seeming to design it. Twilight was already upon the scene, and soon the darkened shades began to gather around. The lighted candles, and as they chased away the gloom our hero bustled himself in reading a book of prayers which he found hanging from a peg near him. He had been engaged in this way about half an hour when he found that some one was sitting close by his side. He turned, and found the juggler gazing intently upon him. There was an exclamation of anger upon his lips, but he did not speak it, for an instant's reflection told him that he had better not run the risk of making an enemy.

"Do you wish for anything?" he asked, still gazing upon the book which he held in his hand.

"I do wish for something," the juggler returned, bending his head so as to gaze more directly into the young man's face. "Pardon me if I seem intrusive, but your features are the most strange of any that I ever saw. Their language is the most obscure, and if I could but read them I should know how great was my power. You need not fear, for we are alone."

Paul looked up and found that the old man's words were true. The fat had gone, and the other loungers had put up their pipes and dropped off unperceived by him. Finding that there were none others to overhear, the youth had less fear, and at length his curiosity overcame the repugnance he had before felt.

"I think you will find but little in my face to reward you for your search," he said, turning towards the juggler.

"O, yes, I shall. I have always been used to reading the lines of those who were of my own country."

Paul started, for he saw that the juggler had at least discovered his secret.

"You need not fear," resumed Yefo-bi, "I never divulge that which comes to me through my power of divination. It was but a single glance that told me you were not of this country. But that is nothing. I suppose you have your reasons for this moving."

"Only that I wish to see the country, and in this guise I thought I should be more free from annoyance."

"But you are not wholly safe if you intend to travel far."

"I have a passport from the governor of Shanghai."

"Ah, that alters the matter. One like you can afford to travel, for I see that you are alone in the world. Am I right?"

"I have no parents, nor brothers or sisters," returned Paul, somewhat surprised.

"I knew it. The heart once shocked writes its tale upon the face. I read it all there. But your past life has little in it of startling moment. The great points of experience, save such as make mourners, lie in the future. Even now there is a cloud upon your brow, and you are going where it is dark."

Paul looked upon the speaker in wonder. It was not so much the words that moved him as it was the manner in which they were spoken. A strong hand seemed to press hard upon him, and his heart beat with a stiffer motion as the light of his companion's eyes continued to gleam upon him. There was something in their dark depths that seemed mystic, and which spoke to him in an unknown tongue.

"This may be a moment which high heaven has marked out in both our lives," resumed the juggler, speaking very slowly. "Many years ago it was told to me that a foreigner should cross me in my line of fate—not that he should disturb me, but that his own line of life should mingle strangely with mine. I feel a premonition that the prediction was true, and why may not the saying be fulfilled in you? I feel that it is so."

Somewhat Paul was becoming bewildered. Those eyes seemed to have a fascinating power, and his mind was running into strange vagaries. There came a doubt to his thoughts, and he feared that the juggler was exercising some *kween*

art upon him—else why should he feel as he did? Why should his heart beat so lowly, and his pulse seem to stand still? He gazed fixedly into the man's face, but he could not see anything.

"I think you are going to Fou-ching-yo," the juggler said, without seeming to notice that the youth did not answer him.

"What makes you think so?" asked Paul, giving more importance to his companion's surmise than perhaps there was any ground for.

"Because there are some curious things there for the stranger to behold." And as the old man thus spoke he bowed his head and seemed to engage in his own deep thoughts. "Go, go, go," he added, raising his head quickly, as though some sudden thought had seized him. You will be repaid for your trouble."

At this juncture the host came lumbering into the room, and the conversation was dropped. The juggler moved his seat farther away from the youth, and soon entered into a talk with the publican. For some time Paul sat in the corner and gazed upon the face of the stranger being who had so worked upon him, and the more he gazed the more bewildered he became.

There was a sort of dim, secret dread working in his mind, and he felt that the sooner he got rid of the sorcerer the freer he should be from harm. He did not absolutely fear him, but he dreaded his influence—just as a stout man dreads the darkness of the cold, wild moor. The influence was chilling—it was unpleasant. And yet Paul Ardenen could not remove his eyes from that strange face—he could not resist the dull charm that was at work upon him.

At length, however, he was relieved. The host came and smoked so much opium that he became stupid and sleepy, and Yefo-bi left him and quitted the apartment, not, however, without having first given our hero another keen, searching glance. (Shortly afterwards Paul sought his place of rest. He threw off the filthy bedding from the frame, and laid down upon the finely woven cane upon which the mattress had rested, making a pillow of his cap and pouch. He was fatigued, and he soon fell asleep, but more than half of the night he was dreaming of the juggler, and once or twice he fairly started up under the influence of the startling images that presented themselves in connection with that dark man. Once he thought he was by a ruined wall. He found the most beautiful flower upon which his eyes had ever rested, and he plucked it and hid it in his bosom. The juggler of Nankin appeared at his side and touched the flower with his finger, and it changed to an ash and stung the bosom whereon it rested. So ran Paul's dreams, and they worried him exceedingly.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE RUINED TEMPLE. A MYSTERY.

On the following morning, Paul was up before any of the lazy inhabitants were stirring, and as he did not dare to disturb the host he took a stroll down by the margin of the lake. In half an hour he went back, and having found one of the boys up he settled for his fare. He did not stop, for he did not wish to see Yefo-bi again. The dreams of the past night, added to the experience of the evening before, had made such an impression upon his mind that he could not think of the juggler without a shudder. He tried to argue with himself that the feeling was unjust, but it was of no use—the doubt was engrained upon his mind, and there it remained.

Again the young adventurer sought the shore of the lake, and after some search he found a small, bare-like jetty, the captain of which seemed to take his room. The distance to be sailed was not far from fifty miles. After much crying and stumping the captain managed to arouse his sleepy crew, which consisted of four men and a boy, and in half an hour more the anchor was hauled inboard and the sails set.

The wind happened to be fair, and at length our hero had the satisfaction of seeing the mist that covered the lake grow dim in the distance. At the end of two hours the shores had become indistinct and cloudlike, and as there was no scenery worth seeing, Paul crept into the low bunk to sleep, for the wakefulness of the previous night left him dull and drowsy. When he awoke it was past noon, and the captain had called him to dinner. He ate some of the rice, drank some tea, and then went off to smoke, for he carried his own pipe and tobacco, and he smoked more for the purpose of making company for himself than from a fixed habit.

It was near night when the junk reached the western coast of the lake, and having paid the captain a sum equal to about three shillings, Paul went on shore, and that night he stopped in the little village called San-ping. On the afternoon of the fourth day he crossed the great river—Yang-tse-kiang—about fifty miles below Nankin, and on the night of the seventh day he slept within fifteen miles of Fou-ching-yo. On the eighth morning he started betimes for the scene he was to visit. Thus far he had met with no difficulty. No one had interrupted him, and, save the juggler, no one seemed to have discovered that he was not what he appeared to be.

The road which he travelled was a wide, well-beaten horse-path, and he knew there was no danger of losing his way. Near the middle of the forenoon he came to a small collection of mean cottages, and having stopped here just long enough to rest himself and witness the wretched fitness of the people, he moved on again. Before him lay a long, high hill, upon the top of which he could see a single building. When he reached the summit of the hill, he had gained the summit of the hill, and here he stopped to gaze upon the scene that lay spread out to his view. Away in the distance, to the right, lay the town of Fou-ching-yo, with its single pagoda, and surrounding mass of low peaked roofs, looking like a giant mandarin surrounded by kneeling slaves, while directly before him, and a little to the left, lay a series of small temples, and his heart beat quicker. There were numerous temples, and nearly all of them in ruins. The ruins were not so stupendous as to strike one with awe; but they were strange and marvel-

lous, exhibiting a style of architecture which, if it lacked in massive symmetry, more than made up in originality of design and exquisites of finish.

At length our traveller began to descend the hill. At the foot, and near the temples, ran a small stream of water, across which was thrown a bridge of bamboo. This our hero crossed, and ere long he became lost amid the ruins. On all hands, and in the most perplexing disorder, lay slabs of marble, blocks of porcelain, huge columns of granite, images in wood and stone, and gilded and painted gods every description. Amongst the ruins of the largest temple, Paul found a Buddhist joss, or idol, near fifty feet in length. It had been tumbled from its pedestal, and now lay out at full length upon the stone floor. It was an image of Buddha, and the fine gliding was yet in its place where the weather had not been upon it.

Before Paul thought of the flight of time, the afternoon had flown away, and the first that recalled him to a sense of his situation was the presence of twilight. As yet he had thought of no place to sleep. He had noticed some small houses upon the opposite slope of the hill, but he knew not whether he could find accommodations there. He had provisions enough with him for his supper and breakfast, and after revolving the matter over in his mind for some time, he resolved to pass the night among the ruins. He examined his pistols before it became quite dark, and having looked out a comfortable place in which to sleep, marked it so that he might find it again, he went down to the stream to eat his supper. At about eight o'clock the moon arose, and as its face was bright and full, Paul passed some time further in rambling about amongst the ruins. At length, however, he began to grow sleepy, and he sought the place which he had marked for his night's rest. It was beneath one of the arms of the gigantic idol, where the rank grass had grown up around a broken flagstone, and where he would be protected from the damp night wind.

Here Paul Ardenen laid himself down; and as he lay there he could but think how strange was his position. All around him lay the fragments of an age that had passed away, and he was reposing beneath the shadow of a mute god that millions might have worshipped. But why was that god allowed to rest there in an attitude so degrading? And why were those hundreds of senseless statues to remain the same for ages? He thought of the countless millions who were ready to worship and bow down to them? He hoped to find out why all this was so, and thus hoping he sank into a drowsy slumber; but he was not destined to sleep long—before he had half finished his first dream, he was awakened by an unusual noise. He started up and listened, and found that it was the sound of horses' hoofs. He judged that they must be crossing the bamboo bridge. He climbed up to the side of the great joss, and by the light of the moon he could see two horses approaching the ruins. Paul remained upon the idol long enough to satisfy himself that they were approaching the very spot where he stood, and then he got down and concealed himself—far he felt that even he might be judged to be no different, yet concealment was the safest side. Soon the horses stopped, and shortly afterwards he heard footsteps approaching the place of his concealment. He peeped out between two blocks of stone, and saw a single man coming up towards him. The new-comer was habited in the robe of a priest; but the silken garment had been loosened, as though to admit the cool air, and beneath the priestly robe our hero saw the flash of jewels and the color of a richer garb. This of course aroused the youth's curiosity, and as soon as the stranger had passed him, he carefully arose to watch him. He could plainly see all his movements—for the light of the moon came down almost with the power of day.

First the intruder approached the broad stone pedestal, upon which the giant joss had once stood, and here he stopped and gazed about, as if to assure himself that he was not watched. Having satisfied himself upon this point, he drew a dagger from his bosom, and with its metal haft he gave several quick, smart raps upon the stone. In a few minutes there came a low rap from the inside, and then the stranger appeared, accompanying this last rap by a knock upon the stone. In a moment more Paul was not a little astonished at seeing a portion of the massive pedestal sink from its place, leaving an aperture some three feet square, through which the applicant quickly passed, and immediately afterwards the place was closed up as before.

For a while Paul was lost in astonishment; but when he grew more calm he began to reflect upon what he had seen. He fancied that the man that had ever passed the night there had dreamed something like this; he had, at least, dreamed of things full as strange in connection with the place, and he began to think that some of his other phantasms might have weight and meaning. For a long while he remained behind the granite blocks, so as to see the stranger when he should return; but his drooping eyes would not obey his will, and he had to surrender to the sleepy god.

The next day he awoke, and he found that he had not gone back to the spot he had formerly occupied—for in case the stranger visitor should come out while he slept, he would run the risk of exposure, so he sought a safe place, and there he lay down, and was soon asleep. When he next awoke it was from being roused by a low, grating sound, and on starting up he saw by the pale light that was reflected into the place, the same corner of the night before just emerging from the aperture in the pedestal. He turned after he came forth from the mystic retreat, and having seen the place re-closed, he walked quietly away. Paul knew that it must be near morning, for the moon had sank far into the west, and a tall wall threw its shade over the place where he had been sleeping. He crept out from his hiding-place, and saw the man just as he had seen him the night before. He was a little taller, and he heard the low hum of voices, and then came the sound of prancing horses, and not long afterwards he saw the two horsemen ride over the little bridge, and dash

swiftly away up the hill. As soon as they were out of sight he came down from his place of observation, and commenced walking up and down the stone pavement. The scene he had witnessed was not only strange, but to him it held out a peculiar interest.

Paul Ardenen had long held the desire to visit these ruins—for there were strange tales connected with them which had been whispered into his ears; and being naturally of a bold, energetic disposition, with a love of adventure, and, maybe, a fair share of curiosity, he had determined, let the risk be what it might, to make the trial. Since the resolution had been formed, he had had many quantities of presentiments, and hence it is no subject of marvel that he should be upon the rack of curiosity after what had now happened. So he walked up and down among the dingy relics of Buddha, and while he walked he resolved that he would solve the mystery if it lay in his power. There might be danger in the undertaking, but he cared not for that. He had set his soul upon the task, and no other thought came to make any strong opposition.

As soon as it was daylight our hero went down to the stream and washed himself; and having eaten his scanty breakfast, he returned to the ruins. He went to the pedestal, but he could find no clue to the place he had seen opened. The rock was a sort of hard, flinty granite, and carved with various mystic devices. Paul knew that among some of these carvings must be the joint of the movable piece; but he could not find it. He put the point of his knife into every visible angle and turn, but he could find no crack or crevice. Paul thought it best not to make too much disturbance about the place at present, so he turned from the spot and went to view the ruins of the other temple, and in this occupation he took up the time until noon. Paul now felt faint and hungry, and he turned his steps towards the cot he had seen on the opposite hill. They were about a mile distant, and situated upon a sort of table, which inclined towards the south. There was nothing very inviting in their appearance, but the adventurer was not in a situation to stand upon trifles.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### STORY OF THE TEMPLES—AN ADVENTURE.

WHEN Paul reached the dwellings, he found them to be bamboo huts, thatched with coarse grass and strips of tallow-tree bark. They were dirty, filthy-looking holes, but he selected the one that seemed the least objectionable, and having arranged the interior, he found it occupied by a middle-aged man, with his wife and four children. The family were just at their dinner as our hero entered, and the peasant at once arose and bade him welcome. Paul made his wants known, and at the same time expressed his desire to pay for all that he might receive. The freedom and kindness of his reception early made up for the amount of dirt which he had to encounter, and without further ceremony he sat down to the meal, which consisted of boiled rice, a boiled fowl, and some black bread, made from rice flour, sweetened from some dark syrup. Notwithstanding the amount of dirty grease which defaced the table and the dishes, the youth ate heartily, for he was fortified by an excellent appetite. After the meal was finished, the host lit his pipe, and Paul did the same, both seating themselves upon a rude bench that stood in front of the hut, under the broad, overhanging eaves.

"You are from the north?" said the host, who had given his name as Lin-fou.

"From the northwest," returned our hero, seeing that Lin had no suspicions against him.

"I thought so. And your name?"

"It is Fou-ying," said Paul, smiling at the oddity of the assumed cognomen.

"How far have you come this day?"

"Only from the temples."

"Temples?" uttered Lin, elevating his eyebrows. "What temples?"

"Why, those in the valley, to be sure."

"But you did not stop there last night?"

"Yes."

"You did not sleep there?"

"Yes."

"Not among the ruins?"

"Yes."

"Among those ruins?" pursued the host, taking his pipe from his mouth, and pointing down to the massive ruins from whence Paul had just come.

"Yes, I slept there last night. I got isolated while examining them, and so made up my mind to stop there. Is there anything wonderful in that?"

"Wonderful!" uttered Lin, laying his hand upon his head with a sort of reverential awe. "It's perfectly miraculous! You are the first man that has ever passed the night there and come forth alive!"

"But what is the mystery?" asked Paul, hoping that he might gain some insight into what he had witnessed.

"Did you not see anything strange there?" returned the host, speaking as one yet lost in astonishment.

"Yes; I saw that the great Buddha was overthrown and buried, and I saw that numerous gods and charms were scattered about in plentiful confusion. I wondered that the people did not take some of them home to their own houses."

"God preserve us from such a fate!" piously ejaculated Lin, again placing his hand upon the top of his head, and there it was a curse upon a place, and upon all that is in it."

"I am ignorant, good Lin. Let me have the light. I have heard that the ruins were wonderful, but I know nothing more."

"Then you do not know why those temples are in ruins, and why the cold east wind blows so bleakly about their gods?"

"No. Tell me."

"I will. And you slept there last night—you must be smiling upon me, great Eminence of Heaven. But let me tell you, for I know it well. A great many years ago—many hundreds, I think—the people of Fou-ching-yo, Lin-tchou, and Teng-yuen, assisted by the emperor and his grandees,

built those great temples. The largest was for Buddha, the next for Too-moo, the goddess of all things, and the third for Shing-moo, our holy mother. Time passed on, and the virtuous people ceased to worship in these temples, and they gave to the gods everything that lay in their power. At length there came a great drought, and it cursed only this section. The people prayed to the gods upon their knees; they gave Too-moo and Shing-moo rare flowers and jewels, and to the great gods they gave a new clothing of gold and many valuable ornaments; but their prayers were not heard. The corn would not grow, and the sheep died upon the hills. Of course the people were angry, but they thought all this might be to punish them for their sins, and so through the whole of the next winter they fasted and prayed, and bestowed more attention than ever upon the offended gods. In the spring, the cold east winds came and nipped the fruit, and the whirlwind broke down the vines and the tallow-tree. The people were exasperated now, for they knew that their gods meant them harm instead of good, so they collected together, many thousands of them, and tore down the temples and hurled the gods from their seats. The priests made no resistance, but helped in the work of destruction. After this was done the people went to their homes, and from that time they prospered; but they would not build up the temples again. That is why those ruins are in the valley."

It was a strange tale, but Paul did not wonder at it, for he knew that it was characteristic of the Chinese people. Only a few months before, he had seen a huge gilded idol dragged through the mud at An-yue, because it had not answered the prayers of the people; but in this latter case the people prospered soon afterwards, and then the idol was not only restored to its place, but it was re-gilded, new ornaments placed upon it, and then the people rolled in the dust at its feet, and implored its forgiveness.

"But where is the danger of now visiting the place?" asked our hero, after he had pondered a while upon what he had heard.

"Why," returned the peasant, with a slight shudder, "it seems that the disgraced gods try to wreak their vengeance upon all whom they can lay hold of. They have no power beyond the limits of their ruined houses; but they must have power there, or they have called the dark spirits to their aid. Unfortunately travellers who have stopped there, have been found dead in the morning, and then the most strange noises are sometimes heard. The Prince of Nankin long since issued an edict that no one should attempt to pass the night near the ruins."

"But why did he do so?"

"To save the lives of his people."

"About how long since the edict was passed?"

"About two years."

"To incur any penalty attached?"

"There is no such penalty, for death is sure to follow."

"And yet I am not dead," said Paul.

The peasant looked up, and shook his head dubiously.

"I don't know," he at length said, "how you escaped. The gods may have been asleep, or the dark spirit may have been away upon some errand; but among the ruins and jewels he would sleep there for all the gold and precious stones upon the imperial joss!"

Paul could not but smile at the poor peasant's superstitious earnestness; but he took good care that his smile should not be seen. But then the desire to smile soon passed away, for a strange crowd of surmises and suspicions had begun to pass through his mind. He remembered well the gaudy dress and jewels he had seen beneath the dark robe of him who had so mysteriously visited the ruins on the night before, and he wondered if that very individual might not be the prince himself. The suspicion was a strange one, but the youth thought he had good grounds for it. And yet it did not tend in the least to dampen his ardor—his determination to pursue the plan he had formed was as strong as ever.

Towards the middle of the afternoon our hero signified his intention of leaving, and having paid for his dinner—only about the amount of an English penny—he told Lin-fou that he might be there again on the next day. He thought he should for his supper, and then he turned to depart.

"Of course you won't venture among the temples again," said the peasant.

"I shall be more careful in future," was Paul's reply, and with that he set out.

The young adventurer followed along the hill-side until he arrived at a point opposite to the temples, and then he descended. Until evening he wandered about amongst the ruins, and as soon as it was dark he crept to the same place where he had slept the night before, and then he laid himself down. For several hours he remained awake to watch the pedestal, but gradually sleep overpowered him, and he fell off into a doze. How long he had remained so, he could not tell, but he was at length aroused by that same low, grating sound. It struck upon his ears with a quickening power, and on starting up he could just discern a human hand about to pass through the aperture in the pedestal. It was not the one he had seen on the previous night; he was sure of that—for this hand was bare, and wholly shaven, and the moonbeams glistened upon the bald pate as though it had been a ball of polished metal. Shortly, the owner of the head made his whole body visible. It was a large, stout body, and clothed in the garb of a priest of Buddha. After he had come up, he closed the aperture, and having gazed carefully about him, he walked quietly away.

For a while after the priest had gone, Paul remained on the watch; but sleep again overpowered him. If he could only have gone out and moved about, he might have kept awake well enough; but he dared not venture out lest he might return to the temple suddenly upon him, and thus, perhaps, upset his whole plan. He was not so desirous to sleep long, for approaching footsteps soon aroused him, and under the excitement of a dreamy phantasy that was just



working in his mind he started to his feet more quickly than he would otherwise have done. And that movement came near costing him his life, for the stout priest saw him, and turned quickly towards him.

"Ha! ha!" uttered the bald-headed bonze, starting back a pace, "you are the cause of all this thumping and bumping. Now the angry gods be revenged upon you for thus desecrating their abode!"

As the bonze spoke he raised a heavy club of iron-wood which he carried, and sprang forward; but the moment of time that intervened between his discovery and the raising of the club, had given Paul opportunity for clear thought. He remembered what the peasant had told him about the finding of dead travellers in the temple, and he now thought he had been made them. With this conviction, he had instinctively drawn a pistol from his bosom, and he had just cocked it as the bonze started to spring upon him. It was the instinct of self-preservation that made him raise his weapon, and just as the ponderous club was raised above his head, he fired. He dodged the blow, and sprang back. The priest uttered a quick cry, and raised his club again; but he struck wildly and at random. Once or twice he raised the club, and then it dropped from his hand, and with a deep groan he staggered towards the pedestal; but he did not reach it. He stretched out both his hands, as though he would have clasped the massive rock for support, and with one more groan he sank down, or rather fell forward, upon the stone pavement.

Paul left his place, and hastened forward. He stooped down and turned the body of the fallen man over; but there was no life in it. The moon shone full upon the spot, and the youth could see that the ball had entered the left breast, and perhaps touched the heart. This was a position for which our hero had not looked, and for a while he knew hardly how to act. But it soon came to his mind that he had better, for the present, at least, hide the body, and taking it by the feet, he dragged it away between two massive fragments of wall, and there covered it with the old rubbish that lay around. He felt really sorry that he had killed the fellow, but he thought that the deed was necessary to save his own life, and his conscience; and then, perhaps, he had reversed the death of many an innocent traveller, who had unsuspectingly sought the shelter of the ruins. At all events, he thought that the bonze deserved death more than he did himself, and there he left the matter rest.

With a strangely beating heart, Paul now approached the old pedestal. He had a mind to try and gain admission to the place from whence the bonze had come. It was venturesome—it was, perhaps, foolhardy; but the youth could not turn from the purpose. He remembered the signal he had heard the visitor give, and he drew his dagger; he had turned the hilt, and was upon the point of knocking when, and he was startled by the laying of a hand upon his arm.

#### CHAPTER V. THE COMPACT.

Or the instant that Paul felt the touch upon his arm, he started up and drew a pistol; but when he had turned and seen who it was that had thus arrested him, he recoiled with a startled cry, for it was none other than Ye-to-bi, the Juggler of Nankin!

"You would not shoot me," calmly said the juggler, with a smile.

"Not if you mean me no harm. But why are you here?"

"I would ask the same question of you."

"I came to see these ruins."

"So did I."

"But you take a strange hour for your visit."

"I thought the same of you."

"But I slept here."

"Where you sleep now?"

Paul found himself cornered, and he did not answer. The juggler looked upon him with a keen, searching glance. The smile had passed away, and he seemed now earnest and thoughtful.

"I heard the report of a pistol a few moments since," he resumed, seeing that the youth did not speak. "What was the trouble? Ah!—what is this upon which the moonbeams shine so brightly? It is blood! Why is this? Do not fear to tell me if you know."

At first Paul hesitated, he feared to try his hand at falsehood or direct deception, and after a moment's thought he resolved to tell the thing as it really happened.

"I wandered about among the ruins during most of the day that has just passed," he said, "and at midnight I laid me down behind those stones to sleep. How long I had slept I know not, but I was awakened by the approach of foot-steps, and on starting to my feet I beheld a stout man close to me. He saw me at the same moment, and sprang upon me with a club—that is the club, there. I drew my pistol and shot him."

The juggler stooped down and picked up the club, which had dropped near the pedestal, and his face kindled as he examined it.

"This was made on purpose for killing men," he said, as he turned the weapon over in his hand; "and I think here is matted hair upon it, too! But did the fellow give you no reason for his onset?"

"He only said that the angry gods should be revenged upon me for desecrating their shattered abode."

"This, then, is the secret of the deaths that have occurred here," said the juggler, speaking half to himself, and half to the consequences. "The people fear these ruins, and give them room to lie in quiet. Perhaps you know the story?"

"Yes; and old peasant on the hill told me."

"And did you venture to sleep here after that?"

"I treated the matter only as an idle superstition."

"And yet you see there was truth in it."

"Something of truth—"

"Ay, much of truth—for there have many people lost their lives here. But where is the body of him you shot?"

"I dragged it to a place out yonder, and covered it up."

"I would see it. You have nothing to fear from me. Come."

Paul could not resist the beck of the strange man. He did not fear him now, and yet he wished he had not come. He had an instinctive feeling that it would be better to trust him, and yet he would have given much to have kept the whole matter to himself. But with what the juggler already knew, it could do no harm to show him the body; so the youth led the way to the place where it had been concealed, and threw off the rubbish that covered it; then they both took hold and drew the corpse out into the moonlight.

"I have seen that fellow before," said Ye-to-bi, stooping down and gazing intently into the dead man's face. "I have seen him in Nankin, and twice have I tried to track him; but both times I lost him. I wish I had known him better before you sent that lead through his body."

"I did it upon a pinch," replied Paul. "I had no choice in the matter."

"Yes; I know. But, perhaps, he may have something in his pockets that will throw light upon the subject. Let us see."

And thereupon the juggler began to overhaul the dead man's garments. He found a bunch of keys, a pocket watch, and a very white, and a small strip of parchment, and that was all. The knife he put back; but the keys, the whistle, and the parchment he kept. The latter he unrolled and found it written upon. The characters were bold and heavy, and were plainly to be traced by the moonlight. The juggler started as he read it, and then handed it to Paul. The latter read it, and he, too, started—for it clinched the suspicion he had before entertained. It was a special passport from Kong-ti, the powerful Prince of Nankin, and gave the bearer—whose name was set down as Paul—liberty to pass at will where he pleased in the provinces of Kiang-nan and Ngan-ho,—even to be free from all civil process, and exempt from all arrest on account whatever. This was signed by the prince's own hand, and bore his seal. After Paul had read it, he handed it back to the juggler, and the latter looked it over once more. His features were worked upon strangely as he traced the bold characters over again, and at length he turned to our hero.

"Your name, I think, is Paul Arden. O, you need not start—I saw you at Canton some months since. I seldom forget a face when once I see it. Now, you are an Englishman, and not moved by the petty superstitions that enter into the movements of my countrymen. You may help me if you will, and I assure you that you shall be well rewarded if you do. Ye-to-bi is not so poor as most people take him for."

"But how can I help you?" asked Paul, after he had pondered some upon the curious document. For to him it did appear curious that he should be brought into such contact with one of the most notorious men in the empire—and a man, too, whom he had tried to avoid, and whom he had looked upon with something of fear.

"Why, you have wit, courage and coolness, and I think you are who might be trusted. I do not think I am mistaken in your confidence. I think the Prince Kong-ti must have a hand about here somewhere, and I would find out where it is. If you would watch here, keep your eyes about this vicinity, and see what movements are made, I think you may learn something."

"But what shall I profit me? I am not so fond of running my neck to the block!"

"O, if you fear, then we will say no more about it. I have thought you fond of adventure, and fond, too, perhaps, of hunting up and solving mysteries."

"I do not fear, sir," returned Paul, with a flush upon his face. "But my life was not given me to throw needlessly away. But yet, perhaps, I may do as you wish, for I should really like to know why that fellow attacked me."

"O, I wish you would help me," pursued the juggler, evincing much earnestness. "The prince has done me a most foul wrong, and I would have my hand upon him. I feel sure that he haunts this place; but I cannot remain here now. I must away to Nankin. If you will but stop here and watch—perhaps one more night, perhaps more—perhaps more—you may see the prince about here."

"But how shall I know him?" asked Paul, who was at the while considering deeply upon the subject.

"A man may know him by his very bearing. He is a man about forty years of age, somewhat taller than yourself and quite corpulent. His skin is light—lighter than yours—for he was born in the extreme north of the empire. He is our emperor's youngest brother. You will surely know him if you see him, and if he comes disguised I think you will easily see through it. I ask you to do this, for I do not know an available man of my own people who would dare to do it. What say you?"

Paul was now sure that the man whom he had seen, taking the risk of the previous night, was none other than the prince; but he did not mean that the juggler should know how much of a clue he had. He resolved the matter over; he had determined to explore the mystic place beneath the ruins, and why should he hesitate now! In fact, the presence of the juggler had given him a new incentive to explore the place, and he was full of the consequences. If harm should happen to him, there would now be one who would know where he was. There is a vast difference between being alone in an adventure and having a companion, even though that companion be but a confident and sympathizer without direct personal companionship. These kind of thoughts came to Paul's mind, and as length he replied that he would make the trial.

"You know," said Ye-to-bi, "I am Ye-to-bi, with much gratitude in his manner, 'how you

have pleased me in this. I do not think there will be much danger. I have long needed a stout arm and a resolute heart to help me; but among my people I could find them not. You shall remain here, and among the honest peasants you can find assistance. O, if I can but once get upon the track of the prince, I shall be content. Watch for him, and make him my man. Was his tool, and when he finds him gone he may come to seek him."

"Suppose you let me have those keys and that whistle," said Paul. "Who knows but that they may come in use? That whistle may be for the giving of some secret signal, and the keys may be also used. At least, they may serve me better than yourself."

"So they may," returned the old man, passing the articles over without even a thought, save to comply with the youth's wishes. After this, the body of the bonze was dragged back to its hiding-place, and then the two walked out into the court. When they stopped, the juggler laid his hand upon Paul's arm, and with more of emotion than he had before betrayed, he said:

"I must leave you now, for I have business that must be done. I heard that the prince had left Nankin, and that he had taken this path, and hence I followed; but I cannot stop now to hunt for him. You will not deceive me—you will not neglect the work. I trust you—I put all confidence in you, and in the end you shall own that I have done you wrong; but you shall find that I have a power to make you believe. Believe me—O, believe me! I will bless you with earth's sweetest blessings, and I will help open heaven to your feet."

Paul Arden stood like one entranced. The words he had heard were not so powerful in themselves, but there was that in the speech that affected him wondrously. It was something aside from the tone—something more than the mere language—it was something that did not belong to the sounds he had heard, and yet it was a power that came from the man before him. He gazed up into the juggler's face, and with a most searching look did he scrutinize every lineament of those dark features. Why he did so, he knew not; he only knew that he was struggling to leap forth into some knowledge that was just beyond his reach—the playing of a double mystery. He did not reply, and ere long the old man continued:

"I shall be here again in one week. Shall I find you here then?"

"If I am alive—yes."

"Then heaven protect you! I must be within the walls of Fou-tching-yo before the sun is up. As you love yourself, do not neglect me—do not neglect me. In one week, if I am alive, I shall be here, and perhaps before."

And thus speaking, the strange man turned and walked swiftly away. Paul watched him as he walked down the valley, nor did he move until the departing form was lost in the gloomy shadows of the distance.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

#### SOME REFINED EXTRAVAGANCE.

Somebody has said, that Parisian etiquette, with a little tulle and ribbon, will conquer the world, while an English woman, with all her shawls, diamonds and lace, will lose it. There is some exaggeration in this statement, but more wit, and still more truth. The women of France unquestionably have a better taste in dress than those of Great Britain, or even America. In both our mother country and there, there is too much of what may be called "extravagance" in female attire. The ladies of Anglo-Saxondom seem to fancy that the more they spend on dress, the prettier they look. According to the statistics of the world, they cover all over with lace, or bared in the middle of stiff brocade, or almost lost to sight under a puffing velvet cloak, with capes that expand on either side like giant wings, and which hold all tight, sleeves, and striped skirts—the cost of the material being regarded by the wealthy as sufficient compensation for the incongruity of the style.

A French servant girl even has better taste. She knows it is not so much the richness of the material, as the way it is made up, and the manner in which it is worn, that gives the desired air of elegance. A neat fit, a graceful carrying, and a proper harmony between the complexion and the colors, has more to do with female attractiveness than even American ladies are particularly apt to comprehend. Many a wife looks prettier, if she would but know it, in her neat morning frock of calico, than in the latest and most costly of fashions. The more she knows of the art of dressing, the more she appreciates the value of the material, and the more she is content with a simple, unadorned, and yet becoming attire, which she considers as the most becoming for her position. The more she knows of the art of dressing, the more she appreciates the value of the material, and the more she is content with a simple, unadorned, and yet becoming attire, which she considers as the most becoming for her position.

#### A GRASSHOPPER ROAST.

There are districts in California which literally swarm with grasshoppers; the Empire County Argus says the following describes the manner in which they are captured and prepared for eating by the Digger Indians, by whom they are regarded with great gusto. A piece of ground is sought where they are found in great numbers, and an excavation is made large and deep enough to prevent the insect from hopping out when on the ground. The entire party of Diggers surround the excavation, and each is armed with a long pole, with a green bough in hand, whipping and thrashing on every side, gradually approaching the centre, driving the insects before them in countless millions, till nearly all are secured in the pit. Smaller excavations are made, answering as ovens, in which they are kindled and kept up till the surrounding earth, for a short distance, becomes sufficiently heated, together with a flat stone large enough to hold the grasshoppers. The grasshoppers are now taken in coarse bags, and after being thoroughly soaked in salt water for a few moments, are emptied into the ovens, and closed in. The insects are then sufficient to roast them, when they are taken out and eaten, without further preparation and with much relish, or reduced to powder and made into soup. And having from curiosity tasted, not of the soup, but of the roast, rarely if one could but divest him of the idea of eating them, he would be sure to oyster or shrimp, without other preparation than simple roasting, they would not be considered bad eating even by more refined epicures than the Digger Indians.

[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

#### PAST AND PRESENT.

BY JASPER DE BARRE.

Where now the loaves breathing voice  
That vied my song in other days;  
Whose presence made my heart so high  
While pointing to Pansy's Phæbe's hair?

For me the morning's dew is gone  
That glittered in the forest's shade,  
When life's young bark seemed gaily on  
By swift stream, by glen and glade.

Now, darkly brooding, murmurs hoarse  
The morning's dew from the west,  
Around my struggling life's bark's coast,  
Above the foam-capped ocean's breast.

Time's plumes now fill slowly by,  
And gloom around my pathway fling,  
As regular like the years that fly,  
The vanished promise of life's spring.

Courage, poor heart! shake off despair—  
Arise thou to thy mission high;  
Be thine the soul to do, and dare,  
Whatever is thy destiny.

Tear off the theory's veil that care  
Has long around thy pathway turned,  
And show the world's dewy chapel fair,  
Its benediction round the hour to bind.

[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

#### THE GREAT PAGODA HEN.

BY THE OLD UP.

MR. SAR GREEN retired from business and took possession of his country "villa," just about the time the "hen fever" broke out, and he soon gave evidence of having that malignant disorder in his most aggravated form. He tolerated no birds in his yard that weighed less than ten pounds at six months, and he allowed no eggs upon his table that were not of a dark mahogany color and the flavor of pine shavings.

He supplied his own table with poultry, and the said poultry consisted of elongated drumsticks, attached by gutta percha muscles and catgut sinews to ponderous breast bones. He frequently purchased a "crowing" for a figure that would have bought a good Morgan horse, but then as the said crowing consumed as much grain as a Morgan horse, he could not help being perfectly satisfied with the bargain. His wife complained that he was "making ducks and drakes" of his property, but as that involved a high compliment to his ornithological tastes, he attempted no retort. He satisfied himself that it "would pay in the end." His calculations of profits were "clear as mud." He would have a thousand hens. The improved breeds were warranted to lay five eggs a-piece a week; and eggs were worth—that is, he was paying—six dollars a dozen. His thousand hens would lay 20,533 dozen eggs per annum, which, at six dollars per dozen, would amount to the sum of \$124,998.

Even deducting therefrom the original cost of the hens and their keep—say \$26,000, the very pretty trifle of \$98,998 was the remainder—clear profit. Eggs—new dark mahogany eggs—went down to a shilling a dozen; but we will not anticipate.

To facilitate the multiplication of the feathered species, Mr. Green imported a French Ecobolion, or egg-hatching machine, that worked by steam, and was warranted to throw off a thousand chicks a month.

One day an "ancient mariner" arrived at the villa with a small basket on his arm, and inquired for the master of the house. Sap was just then engaged in important business—teaching a young chicken to crow—but he left his occupation, and received the stranger.

"What do you buy an egg?" asked the mariner.

"One egg! why! where did it come from?" asked the hen-fancier.

"E Stingles," replied the mariner.

"Domestic fowl's egg?"

"Domestic."

"Let's see it."

The sailor produced an enormous egg, weighing about half a pound. Sap "hefted" it carefully.

"Did you ever see the birds that lay such eggs?" he asked.

"Lots on 'em," replied the sailor. "They're big as all our doors—they call 'em the Gigantic Pagoda Hens. I'm afeared to tell you how big they are; you won't believe me. But just you hatch out 'em and you'll see a great deal!"

"But that must be a great deal!"

"Scarcely anything," replied the mariner, "that's the beauty on 'em. Don't eat as much as hantams."

"Are they good layers?"

"You can't help 'im laying," replied the seaman, enthusiastically. "They lay one egg every week day and two Sundays."

"But when do they set?"

"They don't set at all. They lays their eggs in damp hot places, and natur does the rest. The chicks take care of themselves as soon as they're out of the shell."

"Damp, hot place?" said Sap. "My Ecobolion is the very thing—and my artificial sheep-skin mother will bring 'em up to a charm. My friend—what'll you take for your egg?"

"Cap'n," said the mariner, solemnly, "if I was going to stay shore, I wouldn't take a hundred dollars for it, but as I've shipped again, and sail directly, you shall have it for forty!"

The forty dollars were instantly paid, and the hen-fancier retired with his prize, his conscience smiting him for having robbed a poor, hard working sailor.

O, how he watched the egg-hatching machine while that extraordinary egg was undergoing the steaming process. He begrudged the time exacted by eating and sleeping, but his vigils were rewarded by the appearance, in due time, of a stout young chick, with the long legs that are proof of Eastern blood. The bird grew apace—indeed, almost as rapidly as Jack's beanstalk, or the prophet's gourd. But the sailor was not in one thing—it ate voraciously. Moreover, as it increased in size and strength, the Pagoda exhibited extraordinary pugnacity.

It kicked a dozen comrades to death in one night! It even bit the hand of the feeder. Soon it was necessary to confine it in a separate apartment. Its head soon touched the ceiling. What a pity it had no mate! Sap wrote to a correspondent at Calcutta to ship him two pair of the Great Pagoda birds without regard to cost. Meanwhile he watched the enormous growth of his single specimen. He kept its existence a profound secret. It was the proud proprietor sent for the celebrated Dr. Ludwig Hymarchus, of Cambridge, to inspect him, and furnish him with a scientific description, whereupon he might astonish his brethren of the Poultry Association. The doctor came, and was carefully admitted by Green to the presence of the Great Pagoda Hen. The bird was not accustomed to the sight of strangers, and began to manifest uneasiness and displeasure at seeing the man of science. It lifted first one foot and then the other, as if it were treading on hot plates.

"Hi! hi!" said Green, soothingly, "Pag! Pag! come now—be quiet—will you?"

"Let me out!" cried Hymarchus, in great alarm. The huge bird was poking up to him.

"Let me out, I say!"

"I never knew it to set so before," said Green, fumbling at the lock.

A whirr! a rush! a whizzing of the wings—and the bird was down on the doctor—treading on his heels, and pecking at the nape of his neck.

"Pag! Pag!" supplicated the owner.

But the angry bird would not listen to reason, and Sap received a thump on the head for his pains. And now both rushed for the opening door, stumbling and falling prostrate in their eagerness to escape. The monster bird danced a moment on their prostrate bodies, and then darted forth.

It rushed through a couple of grape-houses—carrying destruction in its progress. It scoured through the flower beds, ruining the bright parterres. Mrs. Green's ribbon was walking in the garden with her child, saw the horrid apparition and stood paralyzed with terror. In an instant she was thrown down and trampled under foot, shrieking and clasping her infant in her arms. Green beheld this last atrocity, and his conjugal affection overcame his love of birds. He caught up his howling-pigeon and fired at the ungrateful monster. The shot ripped up the scales of its tail feathers, but failed to inflict a mortal wound—nothing short of a field-piece could produce an impression on that living mass. Away sped the fowl to the railroad track, down which it rushed with headlong speed. But its career was brief—an express train, coming up in an opposite direction, struck it full in front—and rushed on, scattering feathers, wings and drumsticks in the air.

"Tell me, doctor," gasped Green, "what do you think of my Great Pagoda?"

"Great Pagoda," said the Professor, in indignant disdain. "That was a Struthio—Greek, Struthio—in other words, an ostrich! If you hadn't belonged to the genus *Asinus*, you'd have known that, without asking me. Good morning, Mr. Green."

"Where is the monster?" cried Mrs. Green.

"I believe the poor child is killed. O, Sap! I didn't expect this of you!"

"Be quiet, my dear," said Green, "it was only an experiment."

"An experiment! Mr. Green!" retorted the lady, sharply; "your wife and child nearly killed—and you call it an experiment! Nurturing ostriches to devour your offspring! I wonder you don't take to raising elephants!"

"No danger of that, Maria," replied her husband, meekly. "I have 'served the elephant.' And to-morrow I shall send my entire stock to the auction room—Shanghai, Chitangong, Brehma Footies, Cochins, Warhens and Warhens. They're nice birds—great layers, small eaters, but they—don't pay."

#### ASTRONOMY EXTRAORDINARY.

"Hallo, here!" said an M. P. to a seedy individual lying on the cellar door in the luxury of a rest, after a glorious bender.

"'Hallo! 'Hallo!—yourself, and see how you—like it," said seedy.

"Get up," says M. P.

"Why, who be you?"

"One of the Marsha's police!"

"A what—his?"

"A policeman, a star."

"O, all right—no star—am you. Well, so, I am. I am a fixed star too. No—lie, I am. I am a comet—and the—gravitation of the earth has draw'd me down. Don't you see Venus a winkin' and blinkin' at me up there—that shows I'm a star—his, a bright star, too."

"Very well, you must come where we can get a better observation of you, so come along."

"Taint no use—no might get long—his—well, he's all right, but he's not a comet, but there's no nucleus, you can't move that—his—that's a wheelbarrow."

The barrow was obtained, and the comet made its appearance as the Tomba came moving, where it came into conjunction with the star of the previous night, upon whose evidence it was doomed to an eclipse of thirty days in the dungeons of that institution—New York Penitentiary.

Grapes.—The use of grapes as an article of food is much recommended in case of consumption. They contain a large quantity of grape sugar, the kind which most nearly resembles that of sugar in its chemical composition, which is also useful for consumptives, it having a great attraction for oxygen, and readily affording good material for respiration.—*Medical Farmer*.







[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

## BRING FLOWERS.

BY T. D. WILSON.

Bring flowers to deck the hero's brow,  
A chaplet twined with laurel leaves around;  
For hundred voices sing his praises now,  
And victory's conqueror is crowned.  
Bring home's wreaths of fragrant flowers made,  
But not like those his living face shall fade!

Bring flowers to twine around the brow of youth,  
When he starts forth, the earth before him spread;  
Let all his actions be upheld by truth,  
And Fame and Fortune yield unto his tread.  
But let his life, like those sweet flowers be,  
An emblem of unblemished purity.

Bring flowers to give the newly-wedded bride,  
To wreath about the tresses of her hair;  
Their kindred beauties blooming side by side,  
And let the kisses be a sacred prayer.  
These flowers grace the moccasins where we stray—  
Let her soft influence grace life's thorny way.

Bring flowers to lay upon the locks of age,  
That many years have mottled silver white;  
For Time has written down his long life page,  
And told his actions, whether dark or bright.  
Bring none and yet try to win his brow—  
Let kindness soothe the old man's spirit now.

Bring flowers to strew about the silent dead,  
To scatter o'er the dust where they lie;  
Let autumn leaves be o'er his ashes spread,  
And lay upon his brow a wreath of woe.  
He labored well in the long time of life,  
And he has won at last the prize of life!

[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

## NELLY:

## THE BEGGAR'S BLESSING.

BY NATHAN AMES.

## CHAPTER I.

Of all the pretty blue-eyed girls in Centerville—and there were many such—the prettiest, the most beloved, the most caressed, was the pretty little blue-eyed Nelly Brown. Yet why she should have been, may seem a mystery to some; for Nelly was a pauper, fatherless and motherless, relationless, and all but—no she was not friendless, everybody was her friend—but Nelly was a poor-house pauper. And had you met her on her way to school some summer's morning, with her curly head and cherub face and round blue eyes, she looked up beneath a worn-out hood a world too large for her—her little dinner basket swung upon her arm, and followed, may be, by a half-dozed pet—a kitten, dog, or coquet of some kind or other; and had you passed in admiration of her innocence and beauty, to inquire:

"Whose little girl is this?" She would have smiled and smiled, and answered with the sweetest little bird-like voice you ever heard:

"Please, sir, the town's; my name is Nelly Brown."

And had you asked those little girls who crowd around her and caress her so endearingly, the reason why they love her so, they would have told you:

"Sir, because she is so good and kind, and loves us so, we can't help loving Nelly Brown."

And had you asked that ray-faceted and roguish schoolboy, why he shares his peppermints and nuts with Nelly Brown, he would have answered you:

"Because, sir, when the teacher whips me, Nelly cries, 'I love her, so does every one in town'; she belongs, sir, to the town."

Thus Nelly at the age of six had come to be a universal favorite—the pet of Centerville. And here our story shall begin.

It was a pleasant morning in the month of May. The orchards, woods and hedges all around were clothed in fresh, green leaves, and decked with many colored flowers, whose fragrance filled the balmy air and mingled sweetly with the music of a thousand happy birds. The dew still sparkled on the grassy by-path leading for a mile in length between the "home of the homeless," and the village school of Centerville, as Nelly, with her dinner basket swung upon her arm, set blithely out upon her daily journey, as innocent and happy as the birds that warbled all around her, and more sweetly as it seemed, at her approach. Singing matches of the most pretty songs which she had learned at school, and stopping every now and then to gather dandelions, violets and clover-leaves, which she intended as a present to her teacher—Nelly had already nearly reached the public road and stood upon the top stone of the wall, when lo, a miserable man, gray-headed, ragged, filthy and unshaven, sat beneath her.

Startled by the shriek of fright which Nelly uttered, the beggar slowly raised his head from between his hands and knees, and gazed, with a bewildered but admiring look upon the terrified and trembling little being bending over him.

"O how beautiful," he exclaimed! "How like—but no, it cannot be—they laid her in the cold, dark ground, long years ago. But O, how like! O speak to me, my little angel, tell me who or what thou art?"

"Please, sir," responded Nelly, "I am not an angel—I am only Nelly Brown. I live in the poor-house."

"Well, Nelly, you are not afraid of me, I hope, a poor old hungry beggar. I want harm you—Heaven forbid! the old man said, with a pleasant smile upon his haggard features. "I, too, had once a little beautiful daughter—beautiful and innocent as you—but ah, and big tears rolled down his sunken cheeks. Nelly was no longer afraid, but leaping down from the wall with compassionate tears in her own blue eyes, and holding out her dinner-basket to the weeping beggar:

"Are you hungry, sir?" she asked.

"God knows I am. But O that I should ever come to this!"

And again the old man buried his face in his hands and groaned and wept. Nelly still stood before him holding out her basket. At length he raised his head again, and pointing to a state-

ly mansion on a rise of land midway between the schoolhouse and the neighboring village:

"Who," he asks, "who lives in that proud house?"

"Squire Houghton, sir; they are going to take me there to live with them. He is the richest man in town."

"A curse upon him and his riches!" uttered the old man, striking the ground with his staff. "A curse upon him and his house. I begged of him a crust of bread. He spurned me from him like a dog. 'Yonder, yonder,' said he, pointing to the almshouse, 'yonder is our public house for vagabonds!' A curse upon him and his riches! And you, alas, are going to live with him! No, no, I will not curse him; no, there is a God who gave him all he has. I will not curse, nay, rather let me bless him—a beggar's blessing—may he never know what it is to want a crust of bread! And may the same God who fills his barns to bursting, fill this little basket up some day, with something better than a beggar's blessing. Yes, yes, my darling, I will eat a portion of that food which Providence has sent me by—Nelly, Nelly, let me call you so—an angel, as you are," he said, and from the proffered basket with a trembling hand, he drew out a piece of Indian bread, and handed back the rest to Nelly.

"No, no, you need not more than me, poor man! here, take it all," said Nelly, and putting the action to the word, she emptied her basket into the old man's lap, and then began to run away.

"Nay, nay, you blessed little soul, come back. I cannot rob you of your dinner—you will starve without your dinner."

"No," answered Nelly; "all the little girls will give me some of their—or Willy Noble will, at any rate; he brought me yesterday more cakes than I could eat, and gave me dinner to a hungry dog that came along."

"God bless you then, and Willy Noble, too. But stop, my little angel, do not run away. Is that your book?"

"Yes, sir, my 'bran new' reading-book."

"Ah, let me see it, Nelly."

Nelly handed him the book.

"And this is then your name, is it?" continued the beggar, turning to the flyleaf where Nelly had written her name in Roman capitals, for she could make no other. "And you then wrote it here, yourself?"

"Yes, sir, I did," said Nelly, somewhat flattered.

"Ah, Nelly, I must have this name to carry with me—NELLY BROWN," he said—and tearing out the name, he put it in his pocket. Nelly stared awhile in mute astonishment, and then began to cry.

"What makes you cry, my dear?"

"The school-ma'am, sir, will whip me, if my book gets torn."

"No, Nelly, no; she will not whip you. Tell her that a poor old man who gave your dinner, to tore out your name, and that an angel took it up to heaven. Here, have you got a pencil, Nelly?"

"Willy Noble's father gave a store and gave him one, and Willy gave me half of it," said Nelly, pulling out the pencil from her pocket. "This is it."

The old man took it, laid the book upon his knee, and wrote for several minutes on that portion of the flyleaf which remained; then handing back the book and pencil, he added, with a smile:

"There, Nelly, keep that until you are a woman—keep it till you die."

"But I can't read it, sir."

"Your teacher can and you will learn. There go, God bless you. You will never be the poorer or that you fed a hungry man. God bless you. Run along."

Nelly hurried on to school. Her class was reading when she entered.

"Late, Nelly, late this morning—and you know the punishment," the teacher said, and taking Nelly's book to show her the place, perceived that it was torn. "And torn your book beside, you naughty little girl. What shall I do to you?"

"The big tears stood in Nelly's eyes. It seemed as if her heart would break.

"But what is this?" continues the teacher. "Who wrote this, Nelly, in your book?"

"Please ma'am, a beggar," answered Nelly, sobbing. "He said that he was hungry, and I gave him dinner to him; then he tore out my name and wrote that there."

"And so you have no dinner—gave it all away?" resumed the teacher, with a tear-drooping gathering in her eye, and gently stroking Nelly's curly head. "And you are going to do without a dinner then?"

"No, no, she sha'n't; I'll bring her some dinner," answered Willy Noble, a truly noble looking, handsome lad of twelve. "I'll bring her some."

"And she shall have a part of mine." "And mine," "and mine," broke in a dozen voices all at once.

"And please, ma'am, won't you read what the beggar wrote in Nelly's book?" continued Willy, twenty other voices joining him in his request. And what the beggar wrote was read to them:

"Oast thy bread upon the waters,  
For thou shalt find it by-and-by;  
He who does a deed of kindness,  
Lays a treasure up on high."

## CHAPTER II.

That was indeed a most eventful day for Nelly. The story of her generosity and strange adventure filled the town of Centerville. The children told it to their parents and rehearsed to them the unknown beggar's verse. All were loud in praises of the little pauper. And what is more, the editor of the county paper, heard of it and wrote a very pretty article, entitled "Nelly and the Beggar," ending with a copy of the lines from Nelly's book. She had become, in fine, a heroine. The richest man in town—the very man who spurned the stranger from his door—would probably have given many dollars to the

same, had he been sure of getting such an honorable notice in the public print. But there was not the slightest probability that such would be the case;—therefore, the little Nelly and the priest of old, the pained the suffering stranger "on the other side," and left the little paper girl to win the glory of "the good Samaritan."

Nelly hurried home that afternoon, her basket full of cakes and pies—for all contributed their mite to make up what the beggar took from her—and was already happily engaged dividing them among her old companions of the almshouse, when Mr. Houghton's chair drove up to take her off. And many tears were in the eyes and many blessings on the tongues of Nelly's aged friends at her departure for the rich man's house. Nelly, too, could not refrain from weeping, albeit she had been told that it would be very fine for her to leave the almshouse, and live in Mr. Houghton's family and live so well.

Ab, Nelly, thou hast seen thy happiest days of childhood. Thou art now no more the daughter of the town. But let us follow her to that proud home on which the beggar's curse reposed.

At the earnest and repeated solicitation of Mrs. Houghton, who was now an invalid, her husband had reluctantly consented to receive the town of one whose little life for six long years had been so great a burden. Had he but done the same kind and some years ago, before the paper girl had got to be so large and capable, the town would probably have regarded the better of his generosity; but "better late than never," Mr. Houghton thought and deemed himself almost a Howard.

"Beside," suggested Mrs. Houghton, "she is old enough to earn her living now, and what is more, for years she has saved the cost of her hiring help. And then it will be thought so liberal in us to feed, and clothe, and educate an orphan pauper in our family." And so the rich man's heart was opened, and he took the orphan in.

Let us not suppose, however, that the proud, though kind and tender-hearted Mrs. Houghton was entirely selfish in her wish to rescue Nelly from the almshouse; she really thought and meant to better Nelly's lot. But then she knew what arguments would best prevail with Mr. Houghton. She did not mean indeed to make a slave of Nelly—far from it—nor yet a daughter. Three of these—that is, three daughters, not three slaves—she had already. Juliet, the eldest, a pretty girl of fourteen summers, was away at school; Belle, the second of the family, four years older than Nelly, and little Marian, the baby, were the only children left at home. But Belle would soon be sent away with Juliet; and Marian would then at least require some one to watch and play with her. "And who," thought Mrs. Houghton, "can I find to fill the place so well as Nelly Brown, the pretty, loving little Nelly Brown?" And she was right.

And seven comparatively happy years passed lightly for Nelly in her new adopted home. The beauty of her character and person, her industry and amiability could not, even in the high-born family of Mr. Houghton, fail to render her a favorite. And little Marian, whose guardian angel Nelly ever strove to be and was, soon learned to love her even better than she loved her sisters or her parents.

But after Mr. Houghton's death, and after Juliet and Belle became the mistress of Mr. Houghton's house, a change came over Nelly's lot—a cloud, a dark and chilling cloud began to hide her sun of happiness. The Houghton girls did not intend to make an equal or companion of a poor-house orphan. And day by day they treated her with more and more indifference; imposed on her the hardest tasks, the most humiliating offices, and rendered her life, in perfect misery. If they visited, they took Nelly with them; if they had a party of their equals, and Nelly was their servant. The cast-off dresses of her supercilious mistresses were now the only ones that ever graced the pretty form of Nelly. How much better friends the Houghton girls had been to her than she was to them, as they could have wished, is more than I can say. But I am more than halfinclined to think that Nelly's beauty was the origin of far the greater portion of her present woe. She saw, and felt indeed, the hardness of her lot, and sighed in secret over it; but still a mingled sense of gratitude, and duty, and attachment for her adopted home, prevented her from murmuring.

Thus two and a half years of servitude passed—her lot was no more the little pet—the little Nelly Brown of olden days. Time had brought her to the verge of womanhood, and now, in spite of all disparagement of dress, of origin and circumstances, Nelly was, and justly too, pronounced the belle of Centerville. And this, you may well imagine, gained her no peculiar favor in the sight of Juliet and Belle.

"I can't endure it any longer, Juliet," said the younger Houghton to her sister, as they sat together in the parlor one Sabbath evening after church. "Nelly is becoming quite too proud—too lofty for a poor-house subject—quite. Chosen leader of the choir—Miss Brown of —; well, I can't endure it any longer. It is time, I think, that she should find some exalted station, where her voice and eyes, and curls may have an opportunity to captivate some one whose rank and fortune shall be equal to her own! Did you notice, Juliet, how very modestly she blushed and shook those captivating curls this afternoon when William spoke to us and bowed to her. Really, Juliet, I shouldn't wonder if she eyes to eat me out, and she thinks her voice and eyes and curls are worth a fortune! She is quite too lofty for her situation any way! An Irish girl would suit us far better."

"That is my opinion, Belle, exactly," answered Juliet. "And if she wants to go and learn a trade—I think she had better go."

"Whether she wants to go or not," rejoined the haughty, but the handsome Belle, "whether she likes it or not, she shall go in an advertisement. But then I know she wants to go; the name and sight of almshouse do not seem to please her much of late!"

"But what will Marian and father say?"

"O fudge on Marian! Marian will soon be

gone away to school, and father will of course take our advice."

"But Irish girls won't work for nothing!" "True—but then you know whatever Nelly earns will be her own, and she will not be here, but father's. At any rate," continued Belle, working herself up to a whirlwind of passion, "at any rate, if she don't leave the house—all is, I shall."

"Depend upon it, Belle, that I shall not oppose her going, eyes and curls and voice and all. Depend on that. But it is nearly time for William to be here. He was to come in reason to escort us to the lecture. It is nearly time—and there," said Juliet, pointing from the parlor window where she sat, "yes, there he comes already." Belle rises, tosses back her artificial curls before the glass, and dances lightly to her sister's side.

"Yes, Juliet, that is William—that is he—but who—if that tint Marian and Nelly at the gate. Those eyes and curls, and—how provoking! they are always in the way—always in sight."

"We'll have them out of sight directly."

"There, they're walking up the path together, how provoking! Well, well, don't let us notice them. Here, drop the curtain. How she blushes! how proud—there, you are playing, Juliet, and I will scoldingly meet him at the door."

And thus it happened just as William reached the long piazza steps, that Belle steps upon the threshold of the door in front of him, starts in glad surprise, salutes her lover tenderly, calls little Marian in, and looks a most unamiable look at Nelly. Nelly sees the look, and so does William catch it to see it too. And from that look a sudden thought awakes within him. It is this:

"How vastly more becoming is the modest blue of Nelly than the haughty frown of Belle! Nay, more, if she can frown—she never knew she could before—on such an innocent and lovely creature now, what may I not expect from her myself, sometime, perhaps? But then again she thought—the secret has transpired too late. I have proposed, have been accepted, and—" but now that frown has changed to most engaging smiles. And Belle and Marian and William enter. Nelly glides away alone.

## CHAPTER III.

But who, you ask, is William? Who, but little Willy Noble, grows to be a man—a generous, intelligent and highly educated man of two-and twenty; and the plighted lover of the fair but haughty Belle. His father next to Mr. Houghton, was supposed to be the wealthiest man in Centerville—the owner of the largest store and grandest house adjoining it. And William was an only child and heir, a favorite in Centerville, and was prized and petted by the belles thereof. His father's failing health demanding such a course, the young man—though he had been educated for a different calling—had at length made up his mind to take his father's place in business, settle down and make a wife of Belle.

And thus it happened, that of late, the Houghton family were more than ever intimate with Mr. Noble's family. In the evening, and on the thought that William could not find a more appropriate better-half, considering everything, than he had selected. William's father told him so; and Belle's father told her so; and so the young folks thought it must be so, predestined to be so, and so they were engaged, had been for several weeks. To say, indeed, that there was any violent attachment in the case, would not be true. And yet they always liked each other well enough; were sufficiently proud of each other; and, at length, became persuaded that they loved each other. William thought the time had come when he should like a wife; and Belle thought the time had come when she should like a husband. And thus they courted one another, and all things conspiring in their favor, none against them—they were engaged. But O the course of true love never did run smooth,—and consequently theirs, if Shakespeare's adage holds—could not be "true;" for theirs "had run" as "smoothly" as any phase.

And now within three months—or when the new addition to his father's house should be completed, William was to take the willing Belle to be his mistress. But alas, before this time had closed, that house and store and new addition were all smothered in a sea of flames. The policy of insurance had but just expired. They were a total loss, and William's wealthy father was reduced from forty thousand down to one.

"Now, William," said the elder Noble to his son, "now all depends on you. With the dowry of Belle to start with—may with half of it—and industry, we may repair our ruined fortune, and—"

"But father," interrupted William, "what if Belle shall be inclined to void the contract, now that I cannot fulfill my part of it?"

"Your part of it?" repeated the father. "You were to be my heir—you are my heir. There were no other stipulations made?"

"I implied, but not expressed," rejoined the son. "You very well know, my father, that it was implied and mutually understood, that I should be heir to forty thousand, not to one thousand."

"Ay, true, my son; but do you think the ties of love alone are not enough to bind her to the contract?"

"She has, to say the least, appeared extremely cold, sir, since the fire."

"Appeared cold, you are sure," inquires the father, "that the fault was not in you?"

"Most certainly, I think the fault was in me—that is, I am the heir of one instead of forty thousand! The ties of love that bound us, would not stand, I fear, so great a fire! At any rate, I shall not trouble her again with it."

"But, tut, my son, you're over-hasty now. If Belle loves you—and she think she does—she'll only cling the closer to you in adversity. You had of course an invitation to their party, and of course you mean to go to-night?"

"I had an invitation, father, it is true; but then it came before the conflagration. I have

seen them then enough to make it pleasant for me to keep away."

"Madness, William, madness, and rashness! Go, by all means, go! Be cheerful; be a man. Your head and heart alone are worth a thousand fortunes—go, my son, by all means go!"

"To please you, father, I will go."

And William went. It was a splendid party. All the aristocracy of Centerville were there—besides there were two or three strangers there, two young aristocrats whom William never saw before. And Belle was listening most attentively to one of them when William entered.

He bowed to her; she coldly bowed to him, and turned again an eager listener to that most engaging stranger, at whose side she made it in her way to keep the greater portion of the evening. At last, however, William gained an audience, and, wishing to decide the case at once, he led her to the window where no one could overhear.

"Belle," he said, "I see too plainly that my presence here to-night has been to you no source of pleasure. One week ago, I think, it would have been a different thing. But that is passed. You pledged your hand to forty thousand dollars, not to one—to one to William then—and not to William now."

"Yes, well go on," said Belle, very coldly. William bit his lip, turned pale as death; he looked for a little while upon the beautiful but heartless girl, and then, apparently as calm and cool as she had been, continued:

"Circumstances alter cases."

"Yes, they do sometimes."

"And I am not so selfish as to hold you contrary to your wishes, to a contract which you made, years ago, in different circumstances—in fine, before the fire."

"Your generosity is worthy of the highest praise," said Belle; "and had I not been somewhat over-generous by others—whom I need not mention—I never should have deemed your altered circumstances a sufficient cause for receding from the contract. As it is, however, perhaps 'twere better that we part as simple friends."

"It is enough," said William, calmly. "The tie that bound us, turned apart; 'twere part as simple friends; and bowing to the soulless maiden, he left her to the more engaging and congenial company of the fascinating stranger."

"William, you don't look well to-night; you mustn't let your father's losses weigh you down," his many friends remarked to him.

William thanked them for their sympathy, albeit he knew there was a double meaning to their words, and pleading illness, begged to be excused, and at an early hour withdrew.

## CHAPTER IV.

It was a beautiful moonlight evening in the month of September. Leaving the haughty home of the Houghtons where he had always been received before with so much deference and favor, William slowly turned his footsteps toward the comparatively humble dwelling where his parents had resided since their misfortune.

"Depend and heartless fellow," he muttered to himself. "But such a life—go the world. One week ago, and I—no matter what I was; I am, thank God, no less a man than then! I have a head, and heart, and hands—and she shall yet regret the day she parted from me, 'simply as a friend.' The Houghton family shall yet, with envy, look on Nelly Noble!"

And so, with a great sigh, he turned back. But then, to see the talk, the laugh, the taunt, the pity of the town of Centerville! Ay, there's the rub! But I will show them yet! Ay, there's the talk and laugh and taunt and pity. I will show them yet, that those alone can be consumed. My plan is formed. I leave the town of Centerville and all its petty aristocracy to-morrow. Let them laugh about me, but they shall not have the privilege of laughing at me. I go to fight my way to fortune. If I return at all, I shall return in triumph."

Thus the young man muttered to himself as he strode indignantly along. He had now arrived at the very spot where Nelly, years ago, had met the unknown beggar. Glancing up the by-path leading toward the almshouse, he sees a female form advancing through the moonlight, and pausing for a moment, hears the low, sweet music of a silvery voice, and in the same direction. Sheltered by the shadow of a wayside oak, he waits and listens to the happy song so rapidly approaching him. At length the night-ingle springs lightly to the summit of the wall before him.

"Nelly, is it you?"

"Ah, William, how you frightened me," exclaims the startled Nelly, for it was.

"Permit me to assist you down," continued William, taking Nelly's hand.

"Thank you, William—pardon me; it comes so natural to call you William, I suppose that I shall always call you so."

"Do, Nelly, do; it sounds so sweetly from your lips. Do always call me William, nothing else," said the young man, tenderly, still holding her little hand in his. Her clear blue eyes, and her little head, from under which rolled down those most luxuriant curls, and her simple dress and tiny shawl, displayed her fairy form to such advantage, that we need not wonder William gazed upon her with a look of admiration. But then he held her hand so long, and gazed at her so tenderly, that it was very strange, though not unpleasant to the gentle Nelly. She had long indulged a secret love for William; but that her love would ever be requited, she had not even dared to hope. The social difference between them was too great. She knew, indeed, that William's fortune had been greatly changed





